

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 289166
ORIGIN IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /015 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: IO/UNESCO:RDFORSTER

APPROVED BY: IO/SA:PBUNGE

-----044874 041041Z /10

R 030640Z DEC 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS 0957

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 289166

NESCO

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN, CAIRO,
DAMASCUS, JIDDA, TEL AVIV, USUN FROM JERUSALEM NOV 22:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1947

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, IS, JO, EG, XF

SUBJECT: SADAT REPORTEDLY PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR AL AQSA THROUGH
MUNICIPALITY

1. BOTH JERUSALEM POST AND ARABIC DAILY AL FAJR REPORT
NOV. 21 THAT PRESIDENT SADAT HAS AGREED TO PROVIDE
SUPPORT FOR RECONSTRUCTION WORK IN THE AL AQSA MOSQUE.
THE PLEDGE IS REPORTEDLY INCLUDED IN A JOINT COMMUNIQUE
OF DR. MOHAMMAD HASSAN AL TOHAMI, EGYPTIAN VICE PREMIER,
AND TEDDY KOLLEK, IDENTIFIED AS THE "MAYOR OF JERUSALEM."
(JERUSALEM POST)

2. THE GESTURE IS APPARENTLY A RESPONSE TO A PETITION
PRESENTED TO SADAT BY SHEIKH HILMI MUHTASHIB, HEAD OF
THE SUPREME ISLAMIC COUNCIL. THE PROJECT WILL
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REPORTEDLY INCLUDE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PRAYER NICHE (MIHRAB)
AND AN AYYUBID PULPIT (MINBAR), BY THE FRIM ARAB CONTRACTORS
"WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO THOSE ARAB AND MOSLEM NATIONS WHO
MAY DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HOLY TASK."

3. KOLLEK'S OFFICE NOV 22 CONFIRMED THE REPORTS AND WILL
PROVIDE US WITH AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT.

4. COMMENT: AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THIS COMMUNIQUE REPRESENTS THE ONLY WRITTEN AGREEMENT (OTHER THAN THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE) RESULTING FROM THE SADAT VISIT. EGYPT HAS A LONG TRADITION OF PARTICIPATION IN THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SHRINES IN THE HARAM ASH SHARIF. EGYPTIAN ENGINEERS WERE, IN FACT, RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAJOR REPAIRS EARLIER IN THE CENTURY. AFTER 1949, THE JORDANIAN RELIGIOUS MINISTRY NATURALLY TOOK THE LEAD AND MAINTAINED ITS PRE-EMINENCE EVEN AFTER 1967 THROUGH THE LOCALLY-CONSTITUTED COMMITTEE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AL AQSA, FORMED AFTER A CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALIST FIREBOMBED THE MOSQUE IN 1969. HERETOFORE, LOCAL ISLAMIC AUTHORITIES HAVE BITTERLY AND RELATIVELY SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED ANY ISRAELI PARTICIPATION IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES. IT IS UNCLEAR TO US AT WHOSE INITIATIVE (EGYPTIAN, ISRAELI OR PALESTINIAN) THE MUNICIPALITY WAS INCLUDED IN THE ARRANGEMENTS AND IF THE ARRANGEMENTS AS REPORTED WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY THE LOCAL ISLAMIC AUTHORITIES MANY OF WHOM ARE IN SAUDI ARABIA FOR THE HAJJ. NEWLIN UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MUNICIPALITY, PLACES OF WORSHIP
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE289166
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: IO/UNESCO:RDFORSTER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770449-1026
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771296/aaaaddkg.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 13f4430c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 368812
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SADAT REPORTEDLY PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR AL AQSA THROUGH MUNICIPALITY
TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, IS, JO, EG, XF
To: PARIS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/13f4430c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009